

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, December 1876, with transcript

Letter from Miss Mabel Hubbard to Mr. Alexander Graham Bell. (December 1876) My dear Alec:

I do not know if I have much to tell you but the train is going so smoothly that I must take advantage of it and write to you. We have been travelling quietly onward, and are now a short distance from Cheyenne. It is very cold today, or rather we are very high up at Cheyenne we shall be 6000 thousand feet, the highest point we attain is Sherman over 8000 thousand feet but we do not reach there today.

Last night we saw some prairie fires. They are unlike any other fire. Instead of spreading to right or left they go onwards a low sharp line of flame. Sometimes this flame, never more than a few inches broad describes an immense half circle, at other times a graceful sinucus line, sometimes reaching to within a few feet of us, coming from great distances on the horizon. Shanties grow fewer and farther between and more miserable and the broad level prairies are divided by no fences except now and then a snow ? fence or a little stockade protecting the small dominion of some squatter. Some of the houses are made of the clayey earth dried in the sun, and the cattle sheds are thatched with straw. All of the poorest and most primitive description. At Sidney where we breakfasted we passed a little caravan of emigrants and I thought what a grafic picture they would make the quaint white covered emigrant wagons huddled closely together, after their night's rest, the dreary yellow prairie stretching way to the barren bluffs in the distance no other human habitation in sight. We are a large party several railway officers have come on board and are talking business to Papa or chatting away pleasantly to Sister, or some railway ladies themselves, visitors. At Sydney we passed some yellow bluffs formed of sedimentary deposits it seemed of volcanic lava, huge boulders of which rested against the hillside.

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We have passed Prairie Dog City, and Sister thought 2 she saw an inhabitant sitting on his inch high mound but she was the only one who saw any. It is too cold today for them, we suppose. Antelopes have been seen feeding quietly little incommoded by the passing train and many have been the cry of "Buffalo" though the gentleman laugh saying none have been seen here for ten or fifteen years. The Secretary Mr. Kraft is a Knight Templar of the Ivanhohe Lodge of St. Louis. He is a skillful workman with his pen, making all sorts of pretty devices, emblazoning scrolls, etc. in his leisure hours and has done much work of the kind for his lodge and a year ago they presented "Sir Knight Frank Kraft" with a handsome gold watch in recognition of his services. He has already designed Sister's and my monogram.

We have been stopping at a solitary station, the depot being the only house in sight. A solitary horseman well wrapped up against the cold North winds, waited on his shaggy restless black pony and when they put the mails in his hand put spurs to his horse and galloped away north going almost as fast as we now we travel at the slowest rate. One of the gentlemen says he is probably bound to some camp among the Black Hills a hundred and fifty miles north. My hands are cold and I write with my gloves on, please excuse appearance. Have you got a map and are you able to follow us. We are in the state of Nebraska near Wyoming Territory Cheyenne is a large town for this country and has 16 thousand inhabitants.